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## General Notes.

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### GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVEL.

**Asia.—The Great Central Trade Route.**—Mr. Mark S. Bell (Proc. Roy. Geog., Feb., 1890) contributes a lengthened and interesting account of his journey along the Great Central Trade Route, which leads from Peking to the remote province of Kashgaria. Two routes connect the east of China with Kashgaria, viz: The Alashan route, along which Mr. Younghusband was the first Englishman to travel, and the above-mentioned Great Central Trade Route, traversed by Mr. Bell in 1887. The latter route was gone over in 1874-'75 by Colonel Losnoffsky, who reported that it represented all conditions for becoming the most important artery between Russia and China. It is by no means the straightest route possible, since it first trends considerably to the south to the Wei valley, and then proceeds northwestward to the line of Chinese towns of the province of Kansu. From Peking to Paw-Ting-Fu (218 miles) the road passes over an alluvial plain; thence to Khavailu (157 miles) it lies upon the hills between Chili and Shansi; rises to a height of 4500 feet, and then descends to Tai-Yuen-Fu, the capital of Shansi. The road is entirely on metal, and from Khavailu to Si-Ngan-Fu, the capital of Shensi, consists of nothing more than ruts at the bottom of a gully in the pliable loess of the district. Tai-Yuen-Fu has a population of 5,000, and its nearest port is Tientsin. From Tai-Yuen-Fu to Ping-Yong-Fu (185 miles) the road passes down the valley of Fuen-Ho. Ping-Yong-Fu has a population of about 20,000; between it and Si-Ngan-Fu, the capital of Shensi, intervene 253 miles, still over the loess. The last-named city was the capital of China for more than 2,000 years, from 1122 B.C. to 1127 A.D. The Yellow River is crossed at Tung-Kwan, 93 miles before reaching Si-Ngan-Fu. Tung-Kwan is a very important place, since it is situated on the main line of traffic between the east and west of China at the point where that line is crossed by the chief route from the southeast to the northwest of the kingdom. No commercial route of importance crosses the Hoang-Ho north of Tung-Kwan. With such roads as have been described, and no railways, it may well be conceived that land-carriage in China is very costly—in practice, 30 miles upon land is in expense equal to 600 to 800 miles of water-carriage. The province of

Shensi is in great part a vast wheat field, and is exceedingly rich in coal, iron, and rock-salt. From Singan-Fu to Lan-Chau-Fu, the capital of Kan-Fu, the road traverses a hilly country, usually 6,000 or 7,000 feet above the sea, and sometimes rising to 8,000 or 10,000, for a distance of 449 miles. Kan-Fu is, as it were, a wedge of China driven to the northwest between Mongolia and Kashgaria, from which it is, however, separated by a portion of the desert of Gobi. Formerly it joined the best portion of Tangut, which was destroyed by Genghis or Chenghiz-Khan. From that period until now it has formed an integral portion of the Chinese Empire, and its importance has been recognized by all Chinese dynasties. The great wall was carried northwards to Kia-Yu-Kwan, 500 miles to the north of the capital, Lan-Chau-Fu, with a view to its protection. Previous to the Mohammedan rebellion, during which Kashgaria was for awhile independent under the rule of Yakub Beg, the population of Kansu was about 1,500,000, but during the wars which ensued before that rebellion was finally squelched the inhabitants were reduced to some 200,000, and all settlements except a few of the largest walled towns were deserted. The Mohammedans inspired the greatest fear in the Chinese settlers, who fled before them almost without resistance. It is a common mistake to suppose that the rebellion was finally put down by the bravery of the Chinese troops, whereas the most potent weapons were really bribery, the starvations of the garrisons of the town, and the distributions of buttons of rank to traitorous leaders. The recovery of Kansu is at present but very partial. Only the richest oases are in cultivation. The population is exceedingly degraded, opium-smoking is almost universal, young girls are regularly sold. Sodomy is common, and during the rebellion cannibalism was resorted to. From Lan-Chau-Fu to Urumtsi, which the Chinese have made the strategic centre of their new province of Kashgaria, thirteen hundred miles have still to be traversed. The Wei, an important tributary of the Yellow River from the west, is crossed at Sien-Yang-Nsien, where it is one hundred and fifty yards wide. One of the chief graneries of Lan-Chau-Fu, which is a town of 40,000 inhabitants, has fine shops, and is in trade with Russia, is An-Ting-Nsien, at the junction of three valleys, and the others are the valleys of Ho- and Sing-Ning. Lan-Chau-Fu stands at an elevation of 5,500 feet, and the Yellow River is here 250 yards wide. Comparatively easy roads lead from Lan-Chau to Lhassa, the sacred capital of Tibet. The hilly western districts of the kingdom of Tangut did not become subject to China until about 1718. The native Tanguts much resemble the gypsies. To Su-Chau-Fu (482 miles) the road

traverses for a portion of the distance a narrow wedge of cultivation intervening between the Nan-Shan mountains and the desert, but the last portion of the way passes over a barren salt plain or on low hills. An elevation of 9,000 feet is reached from two places. Along the cultivated strips coal is plentiful; the main crops are various kinds of millets. After leaving Lan-Chau the pigs in the villages are as numerous as the men. From Sci-Chau to Ngan-Si-Fu, on the edge of the actual desert of Gobi, is 178 miles; and the town of Hami, on a small rich oasis, is 240 miles further. From Hami to Peking there is a camel route, which can be traversed by those animals in 70 to 80 days, but this is only used for the conveyance of war material. To reach Urumtsi (408 miles) the Tian-Shan mountains must be crossed at their easy easternmost pass, at an elevation of 9,000 feet. There are some fertile oases on the way. At this point Mr. Bell diverged to Tok-Sien, the most eastern town of Yakub Beg's former domain, 103 miles from Urumtsi, and on the opposite side of the Tian-Shan mountains. Between this point and Karashahar (150 miles) Lake Baghrash, a freshwater lake with an abundance of fish, is passed. The whole of this eastern portion of Chinese Turkestan or Kashgaria is in truth nothing more than a desert, with fertile oases at intervals, each more or less thickly populated and containing a town. As we proceed westward the Turkish element commences to predominate over the Tungusian and the Chinese. Thus the fertile oasis of Khur has 2,000 Turkish families, 50 Tungusian, and 10 Chinese. Aksu, 373 miles beyond Karashahar, is the centre of a district with 180,000 people. From Aksu to Kashgar, in which district there are 160,000 families, is 310 miles. The district of Yarkand is still more populous, and is credited with 300,000 families. From the extreme length of the route from Peking to Kashgaria, the great number of days required to reach the most populated districts from the eastern seaboard, the proximity of those districts to Russian Turkestan, and the identity of race between the subjects of the two countries on both sides of the border, it seems evident that Mr. Bell is correct in his conclusion that unless China promptly constructs a railway to connect this outlying province with her main body, it must fall into the hands of Russia whenever it suits the convenience and finances of the latter to take it. Not that the Turks particularly dislike the Chinese rule, which is rather loose than severe. Several routes lead from Yarkhand to Kashmir and Hindoostan, but the Kilian route is, since the enclosure of the Mustagh, the one universally used. Before reaching Kashmir this route goes over the following passes: Kilian, 17,000 feet; Suget, 17,100 feet; Kara

Kowm, 18,500 feet; Sasir, 17,800 feet; Karawal Dawin, 14,100 feet, Kharching, 17,700 feet above sea. A considerable number of Hindoos have penetrated into Chinese Turkestan and are engaged in commerce.

**Polar Regions.**—The Geographical Society of Australasia has offered £5000 towards defraying the expenses of an Antarctic Expedition, and to this sum Oscar Dickson has added another £5000. Baron Nordenskjöld has lectured upon the desirability of such an expedition before the Swedish Academy, but he will not himself take the command of it.

Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, who has justly achieved celebrity by his success in crossing South Greenland, has recently expounded his views respecting an expedition to the North Pole before the Geographical Society of Norway, at Christiana. Dr. Nansen stated that he believed De Long was quite correct in his idea of endeavoring to penetrate to the pole by means of the warm current that flows up Behring Strait. Three years after De Long's expedition articles belonging to the *Jeannette* were picked up on the west coast of Greenland. These must have drifted across by Spitzbergen, down the coast of Greenland and up the west. A piece of wood, identical in kind with that used by the natives of Alaska to make their bows, had been found on the coast of Greenland. The Esquimaux of Greenland fish up drift timber belonging to the Siberian larch, and to the red and white pines of the west coast of North America. He believed that the warm current flowed up Behring Strait, past the New Siberian Isles, across the pole, between the pole and Franz Josef's Land, and then between Spitzbergen and Greenland. The thing needed to reach the pole was to have a vessel built extraordinarily strong, and with sloping sides, so that she could not be crushed in the ice, but would be simply lifted upward by it. In such a vessel he proposed to go through Behring's Strait, then to the New Siberian Islands, and then to plow onward northward through the ice, going with the current, packed up safe, not caring for being frozen up. With few men and good, and plenty of provisions, such a course did not offer extraordinary risks. Even should the vessel be crushed, many experiences have shown that a crew can safely take to the ice. Dr. Nansen then dwelt on the scientific results, geographical, meteorological, etc., that would flow from the successful accomplishment of such a journey.

**Australasia and Polynesia.**—According to a convention between England and Germany, the latter power not only has possession of the northern half of the eastern part of New Guinea, but has the right to

extend its rule over all unclaimed islands in the Eastern Pacific. This gives Germany the Admiralty Isles, New Hanover, New Ireland, New Britain, the Solomon Archipelago, the Gilbert or Kingsmill Islands, the Ellice and the Phoenix groups, also the Samoan and Tongan. Complications, as is well known, have already arisen over the Samoan Island, and, as the German fleet in Pacific waters is by no means sufficient to enforce the proper treatment of white men by the natives of all these scattered groups, trouble may be expected in other quarters. No power but Germany has a right to interfere to enforce order in any of these islands, except as circumstances may compel modifications.

**The Carolines.**—A recently published work upon the Caroline Islands gives the results of the studies of J. S. Kubary in the Caroline group, which he first visited in 1868, as agent for the Godeffroy Museum at Hamburg. The group lies between five and ten degrees of north latitude, and stretches from 130 to 160 of east longitude. The population is rapidly diminishing, largely on account of the hiring of native labor by the whites. The current cash of these islands is for the most part formed of shells, and the natives are very particular in limiting each kind to its special purpose. Thus in Yap equal-sized disks made out the shells of the *Spondylus*, and polished, form a money not in use among the general public, but accumulated by the chiefs to purchase canoes or weapons to resist or attack. The *Spondylus* is only found in the east and north of the island of Yap, is used on this and some other isles, and is traditionally the oldest form of money—it occurs in old graves of the Ladrone chiefs. The next most valuable money consists of disks of arragonite, obtained from the Pelew Islands. These are called *palan*, and are known as “men’s money.” A third variety, formed of small threaded nacreous shells, is called *yar*, and known as “women’s money.”

In the Pelew Islands beads, called *andouth*, and probably obtained by trading, form the currency. Each variety of bead has a different value, and payments are made in specifically prescribed forms. Thus forty to fifty beads that are in the hands of one or two of the kings have a value representing £10 to £12 each. If a debtor does not possess the correct money in which to make payment, he has to borrow the right kind. Herr Kubary believes that this system must have been acquired from the Malayan States. There is a strong diversity between the textile arts, the methods of tattooing, the stature, the appearance, and the general physical characters of the natives of contiguous islands in this group.

**New Guinea.**—The proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society for April of this year contain Sir W. Macgregor's account of his expedition to the culminating point of the Owen Stanley range of New Guinea. On a trip to Doura, a district northwest of Port Moresby, he was told of a river named Vanapa. On April 20 he found an opening hidden in a bend of the inlet, and held his way up the river until the 27th, when the rapids became very strong, and the party were compelled to take the shore. Somewhere about this point was found a most ingenious native bridge of V-shape, at a spot where the stream was 70 yards in width. The structure was supported by a banyan-tree at one end, and by a small tree and a post at the other. The bottom was composed of four rattans, above which, at a height of about two feet six inches were two rattans on each side, and two feet three inches above these were three on one side and four on the other. The rattans were kept in position by split canes worked in. The distance between the upper rattans was about three and a half feet. Platform approaches were made at both ends.

The advantages offered by the Venapa as a basis from which to ascend the Owen Stanley range were evident, and Sir W. Macgregor resolved to avail himself of them. Considerable trouble was, however, experienced with the native porters, who objected to ascend the heights. These difficulties were at last surmounted, and the Governor, with one or two companions, eventually succeeded in following the main ridge to its culminating eastern extremity, now known as Mount Victoria. The difficulty of obtaining provisions was great, and the woods swarmed with the scrub-itch insect and with ticks, while in ground soaked with rain and warmed in the sun great numbers of leeches were encountered, of two kinds, one thin and wire-like, three-quarters of an inch in length, the other as thick as a goose-quill, and about two inches long. The mountains were found to be of slate, intersected with quartz veins. The summit called Mount Knutsford, 11,100 feet high, was reached on June 6th, and this point proved to be the best from which to follow with the eye the course of the Vanapa, which drains the entire south side of the Owen Stanley range from Mount Victoria to Mount Lilley. After a descent, the next summit, Winter Height, was ascended (11,882), then Dickson Pass (10,844) was crossed, and the highest peak (13,127–13,205 feet) was climbed. Alpine plants were not met with until within about 570 feet of the summit.

**Africa.—Dr. Meyer's Ascent of Kilima-njaro.**—Dr. Meyer has recently made a second and entirely successful attempt to climb the great ice-dome of Kibo, the main summit of Kilima-njaro. The principal reasons for the failure of the former attempt were the difficulties of procuring provisions sufficient for the continued stay needed, and the want of ice-axes and rope to aid in surmounting the steep wall of ice met with near the summit. To remedy the former, Dr. Meyer made friends with the young chief Mareale, of Marangu, with whom he established a camp of substantial huts for the shelter of his caravan; a second camp was formed at a height of 9,515 feet, where eight porters were left. A tent was pitched upon the saddle connecting the peaks of Mawenzi with Kibo, at a height of 14,270 feet. Each day three or four men brought provisions from Marangu to the middle camp, and two men climbed to the upper camp, so as to keep the travelers supplied. In order to conquer the ice-slope, Dr. Meyer had secured the services of Herr Purtscheller, an experienced Alpine mountaineer, provided with ice-axes and other essentials. These two spent in all sixteen days among the higher peaks, while a faithful negro stayed all the while at the upper tent. On the first occasion they left the upper camp at 2.40 A.M., and by breakfast time had left the peaks of Mawenzi below them. There was less snow (October) than had been found on the previous ascent (July, 1887). At 15,980 feet a lava dyke, with evidences of glacial action, was encountered, and the first patches of snow were found at 16,400 feet. At 17,650 feet the travelers reached the ice-slope, with an angle of  $35^{\circ}$ , conquered it in two hours, and in another hour and a quarter reached the summit-ridge, and found themselves upon the edge of an immense circular crater. The point where they stood was not the highest portion of the jagged rim, and it was not until three days later, after a return to their tent, that the travelers, using their former steps and sheltering themselves for a night in a cave, the temperature of the interior of which was  $12^{\circ}$  C., succeeded in reaching what Dr. Meyer proudly states is "probably the highest point of the German possessions." This point is estimated (by aneroid only) at 6,000 metres, or 19,684 feet. The diameter of the crater is at least 2,200 yards, and the depth of the floor 650 feet. Upon the north and east the ice descends in terraces to the bottom, but on the west and south steep lava cliffs break out of the ice-cap. In the centre a cone of brown ashes, with the top bare, rises to a height of 500 feet. The girdle of ice and snow wreathed around this cone sweeps out over a gap in the western wall of the crater-rim in the form of a glacier about a mile and a half long



(including the part within the crater), which terminates at the height of 17,900 feet. A great portion of the crater is filled with *névé*, assuming the form called in the Andes *nieve penitente*, from the fancied resemblance of the hardened masses left standing above the general level to the figures of kneeling penitents. The highest trace of humanity found upon the mountain was a hunter's bivouac at 15,400 feet.

Dr. Meyer made three attempts at the Mawenzi peaks, reaching a height of 16,260 feet, though he did not attain the highest pinnacle. The broken and fantastic peaks of this group surpass description in their rugged magnificence, and are evidently the skeletal remains of a volcanic crater far older than that of Kibo. On the eastern flank one looks from a precipice of 6,500 feet to the country below. Our traveler believes that the former crest of Mawenzi stood southeast of the present highest point, and that its original height approximated that of Kibo. Numerous flowers and grasses ascend the sheltered slopes of Mawenzi to a height of 15,750 feet, and elk and antelope from the northern side come over the saddle to browse upon them. The slopes on the southern and eastern side from 6,500 to 9,750 feet are covered with primeval forest, which is continued as a narrow interrupted belt on the north side of Mawenzi, but vanishes altogether on that of Kibo. Below the forest, upon the southern slope of the entire mountain, extends the fertile and well-watered plain of Ohagga ; while to the north are waterless, regularly sloping plains, with grass and wild brush, inhabited by the Masai.

The mountain land of Uguene, to which Dr. Meyer took a ten days' trip after his ascent, is a gneiss range to the west of Lake Jipe. The inhabitants are known as Waguene. South of Uguene lies Usangi.

Before leaving the neighborhood, Dr. Meyer made an excursion to Madjame, previously visited by Van der Decken. On his way he traversed the districts of Uru, Kindi, Kombe, and Maruma, and crossed two large rivers, one of them the Weri-Weri, which takes its origin from the foot of the glacier that escapes from the crater of Kibo. The Ngorube draws off all the water from the melting ice of the south side of the mountain, and flows to Pangani. Dr. Meyer falls into raptures about the magnificent aspect of the mountain from Madjame, with the typical volcanic curve exhibited by its 6,000 feet of ice-cap, and with the grand ravine of the Weri-Weri leading upward to the glacier.

A map or plan and a bird's-eye view of the crater of Kibo accompany Dr. Meyer's account of his ascent in *Petermann's Mittheilungen*, 1890, Pt. I. The cone of ashes occupies a northern position in the depression, while the glacier and beds of névé fill in the southern part. The rim to the northward is swathed in ice, but the highest ice-covered peak is inferior in elevation to "Kaiser Wilhelm Spitze," on the south side, where the peaks are free from ice.

**Lake Leopold.**—The April issue of the Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc. contains an account of H. H. Johnston's journey to Lake Leopold, Rukwa, or Rukuga, north of Lake Nyassa. This lake is but the shrunken vestige of a much greater body of water, yet it extends much farther to the southeast, and is longer than was supposed. On its southern and western sides a level plain extends to a width of from twenty-five to thirty miles, but on the east side the mountains rise direct from the shore. The basin is girdled with mountains, and on the southeast there is a remarkable bay or inlet of the lake penetrating into them. The only affluent of the lake from the south is the Sengive, which rises near the more important Songeve, a tributary of Nyassa. On the west shore, about the middle of its length, enters the Saisi, a large river with many affluents. The lake, which swarms with hippopotami, crocodiles, and fish, is at a level of 2,900 feet above the sea. Notwithstanding the unlovely character of its shores, they are frequented by elephants, buffalo, zebra, many species of antelopes, guinea-fowl, francolins, ring-doves, etc. Nothing can be grown, and the natives live entirely by rapine or by the chase. Mr. Johnston was the first white to visit the region, and he came among them suddenly with 150 followers without asking permission.

In 1889 Dr. Abbott and T. Stevens found a stream coming from the east side of Kilima-njaro, and running into the Tsave river. They followed it upwards into a cañon, and farther still until its course was covered over by a lava-stream. They discovered a nest of small extinct craters, and among them one that held a lovely lake, bordered with palms, and containing abundance of fish, at 100 feet below its rim. Probably this is a pool in the course of the subterranean river, which is marked higher up by a streak of black lava. The lake is 3,000 feet above sea level. These travelers speak a good word for the much abused Masai, call them jolly good fellows, and deny some of the strange customs usually attributed to them.